

GILC 63 WRITINGS "LETTER TO MANI AFTER HIS DEATH" ; "MANI" [14 pages] 1/37
CAMERON

LUCAS, MANI



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WRITINGS

"LETTER TO MANI AFTER HIS DEATH"

Letter to Mani After his Death

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Dear Mani,

I've been wanting to write you this letter ever since before you were killed. It was actually my turn to write or to call. I had been thinking during that week, I must call Mani. I never did. When I did ^{try to} call, it was to speak with Philbert, to share our grief. The eeriness of the phone ringing at Philbert's ^{empty} apartment still haunts me. Philbert had left to go to Hopi, to be with his grandparents.

~~When she~~ Your sister tried to call me but I had changed my number to ^{an} unlisted one. The day she finally reached me, I had just walked into The Indian Center.

~~The story~~ She said you were in trouble. My first thought was ~~she was~~ a picture of you sitting in jail and I started to smile, thinking Mani you dumb shit, just what kind of trouble could you get ^{yourself} into. After I asked her what was wrong, she started to talk very fast and began crying. Then I knew it was very serious. Through her incoherence, I got the idea you had shot Marcus, then it sounded like Marcus had shot you and then finally through my questions, she told me the truth of what had happened. I felt like

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a sledge hammer had split me in half.
I was utterly stunned. Some how I
managed to remain calm while speaking
with your sister. Then I called
Robin. When Robin answered, all I
could say was, Mani is dead. I couldn't
soften it. I guess I could have
done better.
You used to sit and listen to me
in that crazy disco, the mine shaft,
listen to me over ^{the} pounding beat, about
Robin. You were ~~the~~ only person to
give ^{me} the courage to chase Robin like mad.
You told me ~~that~~ you could see
~~that~~ ^{that} she was attracted to me. Of course
I figured you were just saying ~~it~~ all of
that to make ^{me} feel better. But I did
half believe and wanted it to be true.
We're still together and we remember you.
We live in a cute little house
in a funny isolated neighborhood, very
married with ^{patches of} lawn in front, a half

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a car, seven cats, and lots of
pan handling raccoons. I collect
~~stature~~ chicken stuff. Mostly my friends have
found out I have a thing about
chickens so now I have a
chicken pin, a chicken harmonica, a
chicken candle, a chicken pillow, a
chicken poster and a big plastic chicken
that is named Torje. Jorge and I figured
out that we ~~a~~ shared a past life in Rio.
I finally went home to visit. I have
an adorable little brother Russell. He's a
Kid's Kid but I don't want him to
grow up to be a man's man. My
mom still has the best sense of humor
in the world except ~~M. Thelma~~ Lily Tomlin
is pretty funny too. My sister Monica
is no longer the toothless kid with glasses
that I used to beat up. ~~man~~ She still
wears glasses but is graciously gorgeous
and has her own car. Donna is probably
a dyke but that kind of future ~~prob~~ won't
be possible unless she moves away.
My brothers are handsome young cowboys
driving their own pickups. But my

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Favorite brother, butch as he may be,
still sleeps with his bunny rabbits.
And no one teases him.

Gary and Earl own property in The
Russian River area. There's a
cabin and Gary is finally painting
again. He's still ~~as~~ nutty as ever, except
I think he knows he's going to be
an old man someday so he does try
to behave. He ~~has~~ ^{used to} ~~been~~ trying to move the
Wind River ^{Reservation} to The Tenderloin. Earl is a
real sweet guy and pretty smart but definitely
a Klutz. He makes fried fingers instead
of fry bread.

I don't see much of Randy, maybe if I
had a membership to The baths. Then we
could talk again about why GAI didn't work.

Lorraine is on Peach St in Salt Lake City Utah.
I'm surprised she hasn't frightened The Mormons
to death yet.

I finally met someone who knows more about
old movies than you and I did. He and
I probably ~~could~~ give Korbel Champagne
the best business. ~~When should we be there~~
~~Marcos on at least be there~~ We're the

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for ~~to~~ each new batch of champagne
~~without paying for it~~
elegant working class when we drink champagne.

What can I tell you about The movies, the films? The Keach brothers and The Canadine brothers made a ~~new~~ western about the James gang. I think my idea for a lesbian ^{paghetti} western will be more interesting. I mention the Keach Canadine western because of your stories about Stacy Keach at California Institute of The Arts.

Oh yes, I saw Dan Halleck two years ago. He was very upset about your death. We talked for a while. Gina and Dan are divorced. I also met Keith, he's so much like you. You would be impressed with Gina and Dan's children. Last I heard Gina was hooked up with the great American Indian artist, Earl Biss. He really is a good artist.

Robin doesn't work anymore at that embarrassing place of a magazine, Mother Jones. I think the major funder earns his money in South Africa or is it South America. Anyway if those white kids ^{at moto} were Indians, we'd call them sell-outs.

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I have a ^{new} close friend, Leonie. She's a pretty jewish woman from guess where, New York. She's a Laura Nyro Venus in blue jeans type. But she does make me think. Leonie said to me once that friendship is a stretch of the imagination, well we really stretch it. I said to her once that I see lovers who should be just friends, and that I see ~~to~~ friends ^{who} should be lovers. Maybe that will answer some of her questions and longings someday.

Robin and I are able to be friends and lovers. You would be pleased with us. She's the only person who can stand me to play Jethro Tull, ^{Spanish} Flamenco, Italian Gold, Greek Bozouki, Kitty Wells, Marianne Faithful and Lakota traditional music ^{all} in one hour. Now that's friendship. She constantly astounds me, and drives me crazy at the same time. She's really cute in the morning but I don't ^{know} why she gets upset when I call her muskrat, chipmunk, squirrel or gopher. Robin really is a cute furry little beast. My cats and I have wonderful conversations about how cute ~~she~~ she

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would be with her little ears on top of
her head instead of on the side.

But ~~we~~ all our relationship is much deeper
than my calling her sweet endearments.

I finally learned the meaning of trust
with her. I've told ~~her~~ things I will
probably never tell anyone else. You
helped encourage our beginning and
I will ^{always} be thankful to you for that.

There really is much more to my life.
Perhaps I should have been more
profound in this letter. I'm skimming
the top. ~~And the~~ I'm writing the

letter I never wrote. I will think
of you during your last visit. You
came to the door. What a surprise
especially since your chic San Francisco
faggot haircut had grown out into a
shoulder length mop and you had these
funny pair of by the Indian public health
glasses on. ~~What a beautiful person~~

~~But then~~ That evening as you sat
in our living room, I knew I would never
see you again. I wanted to tell that I

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saw the danger but it would not
have made sense to you or I
at that time. We burned
your creosote for days after you
left. ~~You~~ You told me
that you wanted to come to
San Francisco bearing ~~for~~ papago
gifts of baskets to Thank Robin and
I for our friendship. You have
done that.

I wonder if you and Marcus were two
white faggots shot in back of your heads
in an alley beside a gay bar, I wonder
whether you would have been made national
gay causes. We used to make jokes at
home on the reservation whenever we'd
hear of an Indian getting killed, we'd say
just like the whites did, oh well
just another dead Indian.

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Who will paint a canvas for Mani & Marcus
Who will write a song for Mani and Marcus
Who will sing a song for Mani and Marcus
Who will write a poem for Mani and Marcus
Who will read a poem for Mani and Marcus
Who will march down market street with
Candle light for Mani and Marcus.

Who will remember the Indians, the
native americans except our selves, except
us Indians. We will offer the baskets, the
tobacco, the sage, the cornmeal ~~and ourselves.~~
~~The prayers, we will honor ourselves as it~~
~~always has been.~~

~~I'll thank you Mani and I thank you Marcus.~~
The songs, The ^{feasts} ~~words~~, The prayers, we
will honor ourselves as it always has been.

I thank you Marcus, and I thank
you Mani.

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I met Mani Lucas in 1971 in Santa Fe
 Some of ~~the~~ ^{my} most important ~~persons~~ ^{relationships} ~~that~~ were given birth
 in Santa Fe. My closest friends
 during my Santa Fe period were wild
 young ~~and~~ crazy artists. We used to stand
 around for hours drinking shots of
 tequila and having fantastic conversations
 about ^{or at least we thought they were} art, about ourselves, about our
 visions ^{about} ~~our~~ dreams. We fought, ~~played~~ worked
 and played hard. I carry all those
 people around inside ^{of me}. Three of ~~these~~ them
 are now dead. Tommy who knew ~~everyone~~
 interesting ^{there is for} ~~to~~ know in Santa Fe was the
 first to go, he died in the winter
 not far from his house. The second person
 was Marilyn. She was killed in a
~~car~~ hit and run accident in Albuquerque. She
 was in the process of moving to San Francisco
 at the time of her death. A year later,
 my friend Mani Lucas was shot in back
 of the head, in an alley beside a
 gay bar in Phoenix. Marcus was shot
 in the same way in the same alley at
 the same time. ~~He~~ ^{Marcus} was at times part
 of this group.

The deaths of Mani and Marcos have affected me in a most profound way. Although it will be three years in August, I still feel the loss.

Part of the loss has been my inability to comprehend how three people who I ~~was~~ ^{was} close in the special group we had could die so young and within a 2½ year span.

For about a year after Mani died, I used to jump and get nervous whenever the phone rang because I couldn't be sure who was ~~on~~ calling and why.

MANI

Barbara M. Cameron

- I. We sat at Baker's Beach in the evening. We sat in the car listening to my tapes of country music and drank from a whiskey bottle. It was Robin and I, this we, that sat at the beach for you. I could hear your laughter as the gulls flew by and see your wild gestures in the pounding of the waves. Your dark Papago eyes seemed to be silent in the hills, in the ships that moved toward the harbor. The hazy blue over the ocean melded into our numbness, into our inability to accept your death. We left the beach driving to Herbie's with our whiskey and thinking of you. Each stop sign seemed to hold back the tears, the anguish, the loss and the anger. At Herbie's there was cornmeal and food, offerings by a small group of Indians in an apartment complex on Stockton Street. There was no gentle desert wind to accept our tobacco smoke, there was no desert sun to greet your passing, there was no desert earth to sit upon, to connect us with other relatives who have gone on.
- II. I remembered my cousin Adrian's funeral. He was murdered too. At his wake, his brother kept asking him to wake up, please wake up Adrian, it's time to go home. I walked out. I walked away to sit by myself. I wanted to walk away from Herbie's too. We seemed so alone. At Adrian's funeral, I had to suppress smiles and laughter when they blew taps and shot the rifles. I wanted to laugh and laugh. I wanted to laugh to release the pain. Death and funerals are intimate. It's as if we the living are passing through the twilight too. We become suspended in our agony and grief. I sat at Herbie's thinking I have done this before, I've had lots of practice in mourning, in experiencing the death of loved ones. It should be easy. It should be easy.
- III. I spent a couple of days telephoning our mutual friends to say.... Mani is dead. He's been killed. Each time that I said it, a deeper disbelief would set in. I finally reached a point when I would say Mani is dead, that I became unsure of it's truth. I got very worried thinking that I am telling a cruel lie to our friends. What if Mani calls or someone else calls and says Barbara what have you been doing saying that Mani is dead. Why are you lying. It's a terrible joke that you are playing.
- IV. Robin and I went to the Feather River to visit Chrystos in the mountains. We spent one night camping along the river. Whenever I'm in the mountains, I stare at the horizon half expecting a line of Indians on horses to be there, staring, just like in the old westerns. Or I expect Indians to be crouching behind the trees. Robin tried to teach me how to swim but it was more fun to watch her swim. I almost enjoyed myself that afternoon because the sun was so warm and the air was fresh. The river water seemed friendly and happy to be going on its way. The evening was difficult. I've always found that time of day to be lonely, when the sun has set but it's not yet dark and the air becomes still and quiet. The colors are soft and I can almost believe that we live in a gentle world. When night came we tried to sleep on the river bank. We marveled at the stars. The

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- IV. trillions of twinkling stars seeming to share a secret so divine, a secret I wanted to know. We expected the stars to light up in a pattern that danced your name, Mani Lucas, Mani Lucas, across the sky. We got very excited because we really believed you were going to turn on this sky sign to let us know you were there. I thought the many falling stars were telling us, yes we are happy to welcome Mani to his new home. There were train tracks across the river, up the hill. Everytime the trains in the night came by with their huge headlights sweeping across the river, I thought of you and Marcus walking in the alley unaware, so unaware of the the danger of the bullets.....
- V. I will think of you during your last visit. You came to the door. What a surprise especially since your chic faggot haircut had grown into a shoulder length mop and you had those funny paid for by the Indian public health glasses on. That evening as you sat in our living room, I knew I would never see you again. I wanted to tell you that I saw the danger but it would not have made sense to you or I at that time. We burned your ^{come} creosote for days after you left. You told me that you wanted to ^{come} to San Francisco bearing Papago gifts to thank Robin and I for our friendship. You have done that.

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